Lesson One: Mapping the Arabic Language

Figure 1.1 presents a map of the Arabic language. This chart provides an overview of the task at hand and establishes a framework for future learning.

PRINCIPLE ONE

The term *articulation* (لَفَظ)[1] refers to all words that are produced by the tongue. *Articulation*s (لَفَظ) are divided into (1) words that are *meaningful* (مَوْضُوْع) and (2) words that are *meaningless* (مُهْمَل). *Meaningful* (مَوْضُوْع) articulations have established, understood meanings. For example, the Arabic word *kitab* (كِتَاب) means, "a book." On the other hand, *meaningless* (مُهْمَل) articulations lack established meanings. Consider, for example, the word "Pepsi." If articulated five hundred years ago, before the advent of this now famous beverage, this word would have had no meaning.

PRINCIPLE TWO

Meaningful (مَوْضُوْع) articulations can be further divided into (1) *single* (مُفْرَد) and (2) *compound* (مُرَكَّب). If an articulation is composed of one word, it is called *single* (مُفْرَد); whereas, if it is composed of more than one word, it is called *compound* (مُرَكَّب). For example, the word *kitab* (كِتَاب) is *single* (مُفْرَد), while the phrase *rasul-Allah* (رَسُوْلُ الله), [2] made up of two words, is *compound* (مُرَكَّب).

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[1] *Lafad* (لَفَظ) is derived from the verbal noun "to throw." Arabic grammarians use this term to refer to articulations because speech involves "throwing" sounds from the tongue.

[2] رَسُوْلُ الله means, "Messenger of Allah."

PRINCIPLE THREE

All *single* (**مُفْرَد**) words are classified into one of three types:

1) *noun* (**اِسْم**)
2) *verb* (**فِعْل**)
3) *particle* (**حَرْف**)

Stated otherwise, every word in the Arabic dictionary fits into one of these three categories.

PRINCIPLE FOUR

Compound (**مُرَكَّب**) articulations are made up of two or more words. Such combinations are either *beneficial* (**مُفِيْد**) or *non-beneficial* (**غَيْر مُفِيْد**). *Beneficial* (**مُفِيْد**) groups of words express a complete idea and join together to form a complete sentence. *Non-beneficial* (**غَيْر مُفِيْد**) groups of words express an incomplete idea and join together to form a phrase,[3] or an incomplete sentence.

This volume deals with *single* (**مُفْرَد**) words and emphasizes conjugating verbs and nouns.

[3] A *phrase* is defined as two or more words that form a syntactic unit that is less than a complete sentence.

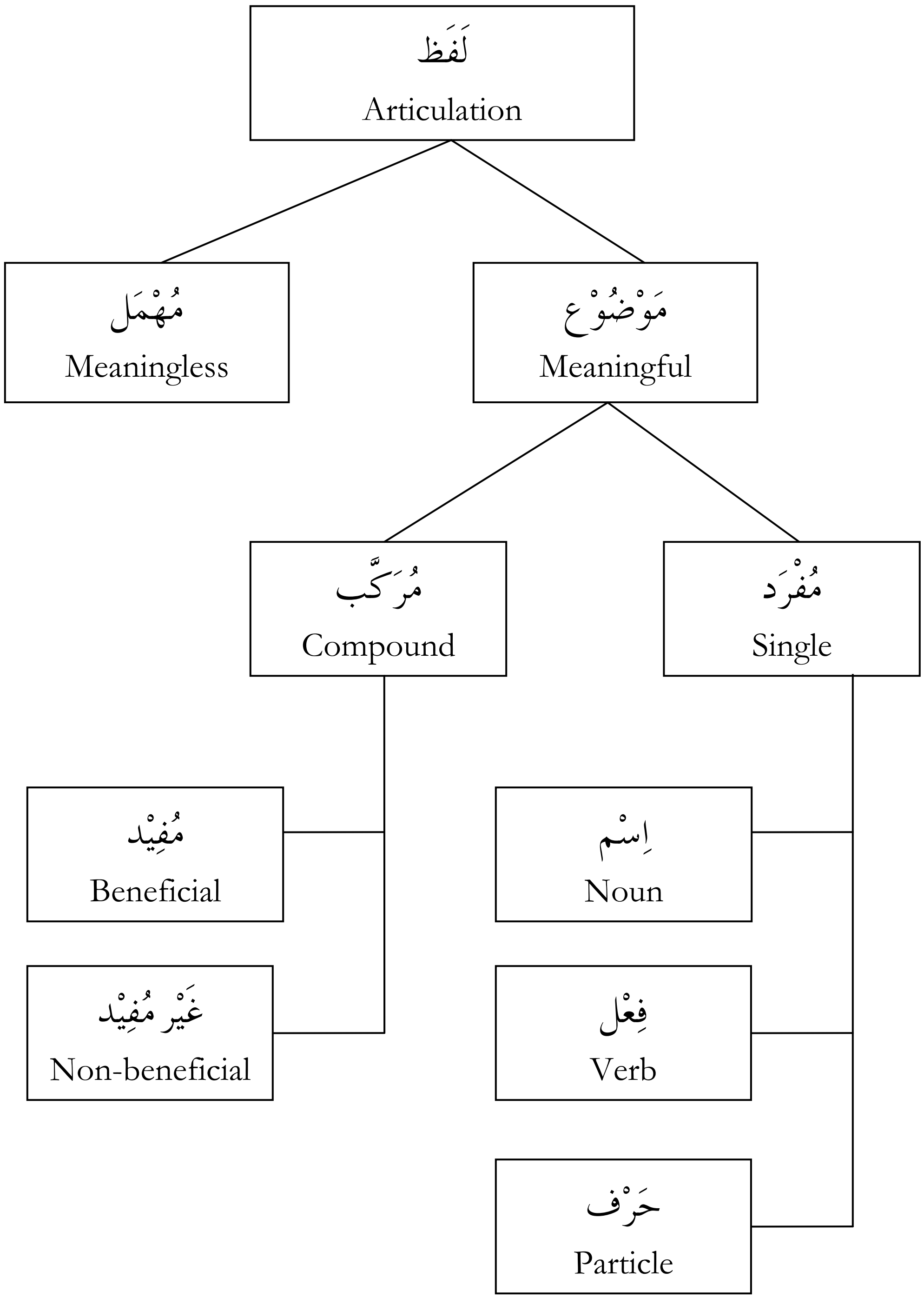


FIGURE 1.1

A MAP OF THE ARABIC LANGUAGE